

IF SHARKS WERE PEOPLE...

"If sharks were people," his landlady's little daughter asked Mr. K, "would they be nicer to the little fish?" "Of course," he said, "if sharks were people, they would have strong boxes built in the sea for little fish. There they would put in all sorts of food plants and little animals, too. They would see to it that the boxes always had fresh water, and they would take absolutely every sort of sanitary measure. When, for example, a little fish would injure his fin, it would be immediately bandaged so that he would not die on the sharks before his time had come. In order that the little fish would never be sad, there would be big water parties from time to time; for happy fish taste better than sad ones.

Of course, there would be schools in the big boxes as well. There the little fish would learn how to swim into the mouths of the sharks. They would need, for example, geography so that they could find the sharks, lazing around somewhere. The main subject would naturally be the moral education of the little fish. They would be taught that the grandest, most beautiful thing is for a little fish to offer himself happily, and that they must all believe in the sharks, above all when they say that they will provide for a beautiful future. One would let the little fish know that this future is only assured when they learn obedience....

If sharks were people, there would of course be arts as well. There would be beautiful pictures of sharks' teeth, all in magnificent colours, of their mouths and throats as pure playgrounds where one can tumble and play. The theatres on the bottom of the sea would offer plays showing heroic little fish swimming enthusiastically down the throats of the sharks.... There would certainly be religion. It would teach that true life begins in the sharks' bellies... In short, there could only be culture in the sea if sharks were people."

From '*Kalendergeschichten*' by Bertolt Brecht.